

the inner peripheral surface of the concave opening so as to cause a swirl of fluid within the concave opening.

27. (ONCE AMENDED) Non-contacting conveyance equipment according to claim 26, wherein a plurality of spouts face the inside of the concave opening such that the plurality of spouts together cause the swirl of fluid within the concave opening.

REMARKS

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 4, 25 and 27 have been amended. Claims 1, 3-14 and 25-37 are pending and under consideration.

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

Date: ^{MJH} Feb 11 2003

By: Mark J. Henry
Mark J. Henry
Registration No. 36,162

700 Eleventh Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 434-1500

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please AMEND the following claims:

4. (ONCE AMENDED) Non-contacting conveyance equipment according to claim [1]3, wherein a plurality of spouts face the inside of the concave opening such that the plurality of spouts together cause the swirl of fluid within the concave opening.

25. (ONCE AMENDED) Non-contacting conveyance equipment comprising:
a [~~oncave~~]concave opening having a continuous walled inner peripheral surface;
an end face that opposes an object to be conveyed, the end face being formed in the concave opening; and
a fluid passageway comprising a spout facing the inside of the concave opening, the fluid passageway ending at an opening through the inner peripheral surface, to supply fluid to the inner peripheral surface of the concave opening so as to cause a swirl of fluid within the concave opening.

27. (ONCE AMENDED) Non-contacting conveyance equipment according to claim [25]26, wherein a plurality of spouts face the inside of the concave opening such that the plurality of spouts together cause the swirl of fluid within the concave opening.